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Classification: UNCLASSIFIED **Status:** [STAT]
Document Date: 01 May 93 **Category:** [CAT]
Report Type: JPRS report **Report Date:**
Report Number: JPRS-EER-93-078-S **UDC Number:**

Author(s): Col. Marian Kopczewski, Ph.D., of the Higher Officers School of Antiaircraft Defense, on the political conditionings of a military threat to the Republic of Poland: ``Directions of Change in the Air Defense of Central European Countries Following the Transformation of Their Systems of Society``]

Headline: * New Air Defense Structure, Direction Viewed

Source Line: 93EP0305A Poznan PRZEGLAD WOJSK LOTNICZYCH I WOJSK OBRONY POWIETRZNEJ KRAJU in Polish No 5, May 93 pp 39-44

Subslug: [Article by Col. Marian Kopczewski, Ph.D., of the Higher Officers School of Antiaircraft Defense, on the political conditionings of a military threat to the Republic of Poland: ``Directions of Change in the Air Defense of Central European Countries Following the Transformation of Their Systems of Society``]

FULL TEXT OF ARTICLE:

1. [Article by Col. Marian Kopczewski, Ph.D., of the Higher Officers School of Antiaircraft Defense, on the political conditionings of a military threat to the Republic of Poland: ``Directions of Change in the Air Defense of Central European Countries Following the Transformation of Their Systems of Society``]

2. [Text] Any form of combat activity, including air defense, is continually in a flux owing to the ongoing development of operational art and tactics, the means of air attack by a potential enemy, and the views on their use. The role and importance of air defense in any European country hinge on its geographical location and strategic factors. Poland's position in the center of Europe at a boundary between the zones of political and economic interests of various countries impels us to be on the alert to military threats ensuing from particular political conditions. The current isolation of the countries of Central Europe following the change in their systems of society and the relatively unpredictable unfolding of events in the eastern countries necessitate watching out for a variety of military threats linked to evaluating possible occurrences in Europe.

3. A detailed analysis of the factors conditioning the existence of a military threat to Poland requires considering the situation of all

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of its neighbor countries and grouping them by the scale of eventual threat as follows:

4. 1. Countries that at present are no threat to us at all or only minimally: Denmark, Sweden, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia.
5. 2. Countries that are a greater threat to us and that emerged from the former USSR. The situation in that region is still far from stable.
6. 3. Germany--there the threat consists of our economic and technological backwardness. As for the military threat, given the current international situation, it is hardly likely, but, in view of the huge military and economic potential of Germany, it has to be taken into account.
7. Thus, the political, and hence also the military, situation in Central Europe is exceptionally complex, and it may grow worse in the years to come. In extremal situations and the absence of successful political actions (a collective security system), Poland and, indirectly, other countries of Central Europe may find themselves in a kind of political encirclement (or isolation), leading to military consequences.

8. Structure of Perils

9. An assessment of the dangers to Poland and other countries of Central Europe prompts the conclusion that the traditional concept of massed air attacks against the territory of the former Warsaw Pact that might be carried out by the NATO air force is no longer a viable basis for planning air defense. Previously, the political and military conditions in Europe had been the principal cause of a widespread fear of a surprise air strike by the potential enemy. That fear or psychosis persisted even during periods of declared detente. Any unidentified flying object used to be interpreted by people as the beginning of World War III. Air-defense systems were often placed on alert status not by the potential enemy but by an accident, and such errors bore tragic consequences. For example, on 1 September 1983, Soviet air-defense fighters shot down a Boeing 747 over Kamchatka. Several months afterward, an Iranian A-300 passenger plane was brought down by a missile launched from a United States warship. On 28 May 1987, Mathias Rust's flight in a sports plane triggered Soviet air defense into a state of combat readiness. The event of 1989 was the overflight of a MiG-23 past half of Europe after its pilot left it by parachute owing to a breakdown.

10. Protection against the effects of various errors necessitates

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exploring in peacetime ever better means, methods, and forms of military monitoring of the airspace in the context of its demilitarization. What, then, is the threat from the air nowadays?

11. Polish airspace (by the will of the government) is being utilized by quite a few users for a variety of purposes, on employing aircraft of varying design and possibilities. In general, both civilian and military objects, Polish and foreign, may be present in that airspace. Their number varies greatly, depending on the time of day and the season of the year. At present, some 200 aircraft overfly Polish territory daily (and about 2,000 overfly German territory). All airspace users are obliged to strictly heed the air traffic rules, and their compliance is monitored by an appropriate control system. It is a fact that, in Poland, that system displays certain defects so that users of our airspace may cause accidental or purposeful (terrorist) threats.

12. Those airspace characteristics are the basis for evaluating possible dangers from the air over Polish territory in peacetime and, hence, also serve to reach conclusions concerning the nature of our air defense:

13. -It must be continually ready to monitor the entire Polish airspace.

14. -It should act as a deterrent to any potential airspace violator.

15. -It should operate with weapons of considerable firepower and well-trained crews capable of responding to the danger of terrorist attacks.

16. A requirement for the solidity of the country's defense system is its ability to deter threats in times of eventual conflict. Until such time that we gain new allies linked to us by treaties of mutual military assistance, threats to Poland from the air should be viewed as a combination of factors, any of which may be likely.

17. The Eastern Direction. The air forces of the former USSR may be a major danger to us in view of their considerable numerical superiority and the availability to them of thorough information about the infrastructure and basing of our units. The aircraft units based in the western military districts adjoining our eastern boundaries and the Baltic Fleet together total about 1,500 aircraft. They may be flown in from various directions, and the principal air strike targets in our country would be: elements of the Polish air-defense system, the main groupings of troops, administrative and economic centers, and the transportation infrastructure east of the

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Vistula line.

18. The Western Direction. The German Air Force consists of 630 aircraft. Their current basing 50-100 km in the interior (plus monitoring and guidance elements 10-20 km in the interior) makes possible the execution of surprise attacks from two directions: the sea and Berlin.

19. An assessment of the dangers in the event of a conflict prompts the following conclusions:

20. -In peacetime, financial and organizational actions should be focused on building strong air-defense systems in regions of special danger (the Pomeranian Military District and the coastal air-defense zone).

21. -The military districts that include regions directly threatened in the event of a conflict should operate with strong and maneuverable air-defense units.

22. -Troop air defense should be chiefly in the nature of direct air defense.

23. Directions of Change in Air Defense; Aspects of the Polish Air Defense Model

24. Until recently, the air-defense systems of the countries of Central Europe were an integral component of the air-defense system of the Warsaw Pact. That meant that priority was given to the aims and tasks of the Warsaw Pact over the tasks of protecting the national territory. Such a hierarchy of the aims and tasks of air defense was not conducive to the formulation of a sovereign military policy by the individual member countries. The air-defense system of the Warsaw Pact countries represented clearly defined elements of the overall aims and organizational structure of the coalition system. Poland, by virtue of its geographical position, served to protect the northern wing of the coalition and focused the efforts of its own air-defense system on the Baltic seacoast, upon committing considerable investment outlays for that purpose. Similar tasks and priorities obliged the other member countries of the coalition. But, however objectionable that situation may have been, it would be a mistake to overlook the fact that the division of effort within the coalition rationalized the outlays on air defense of Poland, the former Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria and was conducive to mutual security.

25. That situation changed radically with the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. What used to be good as part of the coalition whole

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proved to be weak and ill-organized for every former member country now on its own. The maladjustment of the air-defense systems of the countries of Central Europe to the new conditions is also due to their loss of their big-power protector, the USSR, especially as regards antimissile and antispace defense.

26. The countries of Central Europe are facing the problem of radically changing the organizational structure of their own national air-defense systems. Hence, what kind of changes, and what should their nature be? And can those countries at present afford to introduce them? I believe that the nature of the changes in the air-defense systems of those countries can be grasped by means of a long-range view of the role and place of their airspaces, which will develop as part of the new relations between the Commonwealth of Independent States, especially Russia, and a united Western Europe. To both of those parties, the airspaces of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary constitute a genuine buffer zone that can equally well promote mutual security and threats.

27. It appears that Western Europe and Russia will, in that respect, make decisions advantageous to themselves first of all. Therefore, even now it is highly important to the countries of Central Europe whether the European countries accept a strong air defense of the above-mentioned buffer zone—strong enough to oppose the utilization of its airspace as a transit zone for an air strike or to respond to that strike—or whether it would be better for them for the air defense of that region to be weak, weak enough to permit the arbitrary utilization of airspace by anyone at will. Consider that by assumption that airspace seems ideally designed as a locale for an eventual gigantic air battle outside the territory of the countries engaging in that battle. Only time will answer that and other similar questions.

28. The experience at the end of this century shows that a strong and well-organized air defense is needed in the present-day world. Only such a defense can assure the proper existence of countries and serve to engage in offensive and defensive operations on land, on sea, and in the air. The role of the Polish air-defense system ensues from its geographic location and strategic conditions of military alignment. It can be thus stated that the role of air defense in the nation's defense system is determined by: the extent of danger from the air, the possibility of eliminating or reducing that danger, and the views on the means of eliminating or reducing that danger. Allowing for those determining factors, modern air defense should be characterized by:

29. -Combating enemy air strength from all threatened directions throughout the altitude range.

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30. -Concentrating the air-defense effort in the principal regions and directions of the threat.
31. -Continuously responding to enemy attacks over the entire national territory and far beyond its boundaries.
32. -Highly effectively destroying the enemy's air strength at various altitudes and air speeds.
33. -Combating the enemy's air strength in the presence of considerable radio-electronic noise.
34. -Flexibly operating the forces and resources of the air-defense system.
35. Considering the political and military situation in Europe and the role and requirements of the air-defense system, its restructuring in the countries of Central Europe is a necessity that brooks no delay. In view of its geopolitical position in Europe, Poland should show initiative in developing a model air-defense system of its own. That initiative in abandoning whatever is outworn and unsuited to the formation of a European security system could provide an example to other countries. Its announcement could be yet another stage in making credible the goals of the military policy of Poland, which wants to build its own armed forces, with the object of maintaining a state of armed neutrality.
36. A broad analysis of European political-military, operational, and economic conditions warrants considering a gradual "civilian conversion" of that part of the air-defense system that accomplishes its objectives in peacetime. Taking that initiative requires organizing and maintaining two institutionally separate air-defense systems: the peacetime and the wartime ones.
37. Such an organizationally dual air-defense system should cope with the following requirements:
38. -It should assure in peacetime effective monitoring and control of Polish airspace and act as a deterrent to eventual airspace violators (oppose acts of air terror).
39. -It should retain combat readiness to oppose an air threat in the event of armed aggression against Poland.
40. The peacetime air-defense system should be prepared to accomplish the following objectives:

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41. -Alerting and keeping posted the government and the military about air activity in neighboring countries and any eventual actions taken in the vicinity of our borders.
42. -Assuring air security (with the object of protecting the integrity of the airspace) by responding to any overflight that constitutes a threat-that is, to any unidentified overflight or one not following the accepted rules.
43. -Controlling air traffic, chiefly to ensure adherence to rules and standards, and coordinating military air traffic with civilian air traffic and experimental flights.
44. -Conducting search-and-rescue operations, inclusive of the organization of operational cooperation among teams searching for lost aircraft and rescue teams.
45. The postulated scope of the peacetime objectives of air defense requires radical organizational changes. In that context, the Border Guards should be responsible for the air protection of borders, in partnership with civilian monitoring and control of air traffic and civilian communications and supply systems. That would be the first measure to break with the practice of "standing on guard of national sovereignty with fully ready armed forces," a practice that should be regarded as a cold war relic.
46. Periods of intensive change are always characterized by considerable uncertainty about the future. That is so now, too; we can consider many probable scenarios of the future geopolitical situation in Europe, but we cannot predict which one will prove true. On the one-to be sure, realistic-extreme, there is the possibility of the formation of a European security system in the short run, while, on the other, there may arise the danger of Poland's becoming isolated from the European Community and facing a growing military threat.
47. In view of that, our fundamental strategic objectives should be, first, the creation of sufficient defensive strength to discourage potential aggressors from attempting to use armed force in order to exert pressure or perpetrate aggression, and, second, in the event of aggression, to repulse the enemy's strikes and, in the event of its invasion of our national territory, to destroy its forces or push them back beyond our borders.
48. Thus, the need to start work on adapting the Polish air-defense system to the new political, economic, and defense conditions arising in our country and in the neighboring countries is justified. Those conditions require an innovative definition of the role and place of

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air defense in the Polish system of national defense and, partially, also in the European military system. As a consequence, the organizational and operating requirements for a Polish air-defense system have to be adapted to future needs by developing and testing different models of that system.

49. The present-day Polish air-defense system includes a broad variety of specialized means of counteracting potential air strikes. The jurisdiction over those means varies. Generally speaking, the objectives of broadly interpreted air defense are being accomplished: by the Air Force and the Air Defense Troops, which have been merged into a single branch of armed forces; the antiaircraft troops, as a branch of operational service; radio-electronic warfare units and subunits, and the antiaircraft units of the Navy. That organizational fragmentation is counterproductive. Too many decisionmakers, using the same kind of resources, want to do the same thing in Polish airspace. The current Polish air-defense system is adapted to accomplishing Warsaw Pact objectives rather than those of a conceptual model of Polish national air defense.

50. * * *

51. To sum up the reflections on a conceptual model of the Polish air-defense system, it can be stated that:

52. -The nature of that system is determined by the magnitude of its combat potential, the manner in which it is used, and the nature of the threat.

53. -The magnitude of combat potential should ensue from the needs (requirements) for counteracting the air threat.

54. -The operating procedures and organizational structure (including division of labor) should be optimized in the interest of the Polish air-defense system as a whole rather than of its selected elements (such as the Antiaircraft Defense Troops, the Air Force and Air Defense Troops, and others).

55. -Air defense should be extended to the entire Polish territory, along with all objects present thereon, on varying the pattern of deployment of the combat resources, depending on the degree of threat and the importance of objects.

56. -Given the proposed model of the Polish air-defense system, allowance should be made for two basic categories: zonal air defense and direct air defense. That differentiation is required by the differences in the threat posed to air defense by different kinds of airborne means of attack. In accordance with that division, the

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Polish air-defense system should be divided into two separate but mutually complementary parts: a national air-defense system in charge of zonal air defense and a military air-defense system in charge of operational direct air defense for the purposes of troop support.

57. -The organizational structures of air defense themselves should be simplified, especially as regards the chain of command, which should be reduced to a minimum (while at the same time assuring a sufficient variety of equipment for each structure).

58. -The basic elements of direct air defense should be the reconnaissance-command-fire team (artillery battalion, battery). That kind of defense should be, like antitank defense, propagated throughout the military.

59. -Air defense in all of its aspects should be subordinated to the overall national defense system, which in practical terms will mean that the territorial division of zonal air defense would correspond to the design of organizational structures and the scopes of competence.

60. -In peacetime, a part of the resources of Polish air defense should be used to monitor the airspace and as a deterrent. ~~Allowing for the requirements of modern air defense and the directions of its development,~~ it can be argued that the role of air defense will steadily grow, and its effectiveness will be a fundamental criterion for evaluating the defensive capability of a country or a coalition of countries.

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